

● Article ●

Family Ties: Gender in Ueda Akinari's *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*

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Abstract

Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) severed his ties to the mercantile class as he grew to become a rather reactionary promoter of national learning. *Ugetsu monogatari* (1776, *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*), his collection of supernatural tales, shows contempt for profit-seeking merchants while extolling neo-Confucian values. Akinari's samurai protagonists may be seen as a prototype of the Meiji superfluous hero. Separated from the mundane world, they have nothing left to do. The homosocial realm inhabited by samurai also suggests the importance of the *nanshoku* (homosexual) relationship between Akana and Samon in "Chrysanthemum Tryst" idealized in the tale.

Misogynistic pronouncements by the narrator are often contradicted by the virtuous behavior of female characters. Miyagi, a stoic and noble wife linked by her poetry to Japan's classical past, is praised for her self-abnegation, her story an expression of male obsession with female chastity that emerged in the Edo period. Despite their meek appearances, women are potential shamans whose bodies symbolically manifest numerous taboos the violation of which can bring about terrible misfortune. Frustrated longing unleashes *urami*, (a hateful grudge) with often lethal consequences. The wild nature of Akinari's women demands high maintenance from their male custodians. To the extent that they remain within their households, they present little threat. The spirits of wronged wives, however, act as a supernatural police force supervising the movements of their husbands and ensuring that male behavior conform to neo-Confucian ethics. Dead or alive, wives are viewed as a means of harnessing young men and imposing stability upon them.

Born to a courtesan of the pleasure quarters in Osaka, Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) was soon adopted into the family of a former samurai who made a living selling paper and oil. After his father's death, the adult Akinari

managed his father's shop albeit with scant passion. After being burned out in 1771, he shed his merchant clothing for good, and eventually began the study of medicine, one of the few professions suitable to a scholar. Early in his writing career, Akinari had dabbled in the literature of the floating world, participating in haikai circles and publishing two collections of ukiyō-zōshi, but once he began to study under Kato Umaki, a disciple of Kamo no Mabuchi, he threw himself into scholarly pursuits and regretted his earlier works. Akinari became a passionate devotee of national learning, pouring over classical Japanese literature such as the *Tale of Genji* and the poetry anthology *Manyōshū*. In 1776, he published *Ugetsu monogatari* (Tales of Moonlight and Rain), the collection of nine mostly supernatural tales that established him as the one of the most famous writers of eighteenth-century Japan.

Akinari's juxtaposition in his preface of the *Tale of Genji* with the Chinese classic *Water Margins* reflects his studies in National Learning, which asserted the equality if not superiority of Japanese classics in comparison to Chinese texts. *Ugetsu* is written in a mixture of Japanese and Chinese classical language known as *wakan konkō*, though Takada Mamoru argues that the tales rely heavily on classical Japanese rhetorical techniques (*wabunteki shūji*). Nakamura Hiroyasu has identified more than 60 Chinese sources and over 110 Japanese sources for the tales which are adaptations (*hon'an*' *shōsetsu*) of Chinese vernacular stories that Akinari re-wrote, changing plots and characters, setting them in Japan, and lacing them with allusions to classical literary works. The stories extend spatially, temporally and linguistically across the nation. Takada argues that, through such complex weaving of languages, literary sources and styles, Akinari creates an autonomous discursive space severed from the mundane world of early modern Japan (Shōgakkan 603). Setting most of the tales in Japan's medieval period, a time of violent turmoil, Akinari evokes a world where demons, kami and humans mingle. Takada refers to this as Akinari's "revival of a romanesque, classical realm of the spirits" (Shōgakkan 608). In the pages that follow, I analyze Akinari's construction of gender within this realm, and the importance of gender for the writer's revival.

Despised Merchants

If samurai ruled early modern Japan, merchants defined it. As cities grew,

new genres sprang up in response, including kabuki, bunraku, gesaku, ukiyō-zōshi, and yomihon, of which *Ugetsu* is an example. Whereas writer-poet Ihara Saikaku and playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon grew famous depicting the floating world, Akinari scorned the society in which he was raised. In *Ugetsu*, Akinari turns away from the literature of Saikaku and Chikamatsu, and ignores the merchant class. His idealizing of the samurai class reveals a highly reactionary component within his writing. Rather than dive into the libertine pool of the pleasure quarter, he climbs up to the rock of scholarly tradition, a position from which he can stare down, shaking a disapproving finger at the market-driven transformations below him. When merchants do appear in his tales, bad news follows close behind.

In the “House amid the Thickets” (浅茅が宿), Katsushirō leaves his wife Miyagi to go to the capital to sell silk. War and sickness prevent his early return, and with time, he forgets his waiting wife. When a pang of conscious sends him home, he is overjoyed to see her alive after seven years of turmoil. The following morning, however, he awakens to the discovery that he has spent the night not with his wife, but with her anguished spirit. Only the appearance of his merchant-friend makes possible Katsushirō’s decision, opposed by Miyagi, to leave agriculture to become a merchant in the capital, a decision that ultimately dooms him and his wife.

In “Lust of the White Serpent,” Toyoo, the youngest child of a prominent family, places his life in peril when he stirs the lust of the snake-woman Manago. After being imprisoned as a result of his first meeting with the demon, he flees to the household of his sister who is married to a merchant. When Manago arrives, the merchant-couple are completely taken in by her feminine charm. In contrast to Toyoo’s suspicious father and elder brother, the couple declare their belief that “in our day and age supernatural incidents are unlikely to occur.” They soon persuade Toyoo to consummate the marriage, again with disastrous consequences.

In the final tale of the collection “Wealth and Poverty,” Akinari writes: “A vicious man acquires wealth by competing for it ... whereas this is not so with a gentleman (kunshi).” A gentleman’s house will “naturally flourish” (203). In other words, one should have money, not work for it. Akinari’s tales consequently condemn vulgar merchants, and manifest a suspicion of economic change, an attitude that contributed to the gradual impoverishment

of numerous samurai and daimyo of the Edo period. In the writer's spiritual realm, refined scholar/samurai clearly should avoid merchants and monetary dealings. The proper activity of samurai remains murky, however. Many tales depict protagonists who are economically unproductive. The protagonist of Futabatei Shimei's *The Floating Clouds*, Japan's "first modern novel" is a prototype of the superfluous artist, a figure who looms large in the texts of the Meiji period. In several tales, Akinari anticipates Futabatei, perhaps responding in a similar way to the commercial forces transforming his society.

Superfluous Samurai

Katsushirō, the protagonist of "Thickets," is one of Akinari's typical educated but socially superfluous protagonists. Born of a wealthy class, he no doubt has received an education that should stand him well. Unfortunately, his distaste for agriculture leads him into poverty. Despite his many flaws, his final decision in the tale to return to his wife and fulfill his obligation offers him a manner of redemption. Only by maintaining their aristocratic virtues do Katsushirō and Miyagi escape from being transformed by the war into demons and beasts as happens to those around them amid the general breakdown of ethics.

In "White Serpent" the youngest child Toyoo, who is accomplished in letters, but has "little practical sense" strongly resembles Akinari himself, especially in his fondness for reading Chinese books and in his difficulty finding a secure place in society. Toyoo's father despairs of making his son useful, deciding instead to allow him to become "a scholar or a priest." Early in the tale, his mother reminds him of his inferior status as a second son when she asks, "What do you have that you can call your own?" When warriors arrive to seize Toyoo for the arrest of a sword, they find him reading, completely unaware of the events swirling about him.

Akinari's scholars and samurai, in addition to shunning avarice, must be careful to curb their emotions. Tagima no Kibito, the venerable priest of the Yamato Shrine, tells Toyoo that he has been deceived by demons because he lacks a manly heart, which seems to refer to the stoic control over one's feelings, and the recognition of one's prescribed role. Toyoo, the priest insists, must make his heart placid. Upon hearing the words, Toyoo resolves to return

home where he will convey a renewed sense of loyalty to his brother and father. The tale demonstrates the transformation of a dreaming, irresponsible scholar-boy to an adult. At the end of the story, Manago's desperate pleas no longer have the power to sway the young scholar. He resolutely holds the priest's robe over her despite her agony. For the first time, he exerts his full power. Toyoo's personal involvement in Manago's demise reveals the "White Serpent" to be a coming-of-age story, a boy learning to achieve "manly control" over his feelings by subjugating a woman who has manipulated him. What is less clear is what Toyoo will do next. What social role awaits him?

In "The Caldron of Kibitsu," Shōtarō rejects his wife Isora in favor of his mistress Sode. Despite what appears to be Shōtarō's successful escape, when Isora dies, her spirit quickly catches up to the two lovers and takes full revenge. In choosing a courtesan over his wife, and ignoring repeated family demands to fulfill his marital duties, Shōtarō finds himself in a *giri-ninjō* (social obligation versus private passion) quandary made famous through the love suicides dramatized by Chikamatsu. In Shōtarō's case, the belief that he can escape *giri*, his obligation to the *ie* (household), dooms him. Men have wives to produce children, but seek sexual satisfaction from erotic courtesans. Shōtarō's rejection of Isora does not concern her personally. She fails to arouse him precisely *because* she is his wife. Unlike Chikamatsu's protagonists, Shōtarō can afford to ransom his mistress and even set her up in a separate household. His problems stem not from a lack of finances, but from the inability to reign in his *ninjō*. Instead of heeding his father, he swindles his wife, and flees with Sode in an act of desperate passion that severs his ties to his family. He has ceased to exist in a socially meaningful way long before his murder at the conclusion of the tale.

In "Chrysanthemum Tryst" Akinari conveys his samurai ideal. After the young scholar Hasebe Samon nurses to health Akana Sōemon, the two swear undying loyalty. When Akana is imprisoned and hence unable to return to Samon on the date upon which they have agreed, Akana kills himself, freeing his spirit to go in his stead. He values his promise to Samon more than life itself. Samon, after hearing Akana's ghost tell of his betrayal, avenges his friend at the end of the tale by killing the man who betrayed him. The tale provides a vehicle for Akinari to present two samurai supermen, men who flawlessly manifest everything samurai should be. "A great man values loyalty" (*daijōbu wa gi wo omoshi to su*), Samon exclaims in an opening scene. In the end again,

before he kills Akana Tanji, the villain of the piece, Samon admonishes him, "A samurai does not concern himself with wealth and status. He values loyalty alone (Shōgakkan 302)". Akana Tanji's sin, Samon declares, lies in having been blinded by *eri* (profit).

By showing how despicable is the craving for profit, while severely restricting legitimate interests, Akinari provides a clue to the poverty and social indeterminacy that characterized many of his samurai protagonists if not Akinari himself. Samon, for example, lives "a poor but honest life, and except for the books that kept him company he [hates] being tied down by any possessions" (109). Even though his mother must spin constantly "to help her son do as he [wishes]," Samon never accepts food offered him by his in-laws. A samurai such as Samon is almost destined to live impoverished and alone. His consciousness of his status forbids him from establishing close ties with social or intellectual inferiors. Several other tales demonstrate the dangers of giving in to lust for members of the opposite sex. Thus, the emergence of Samon and Akana's homoerotic relationship has an almost inevitable quality. The absence of wives in the tale removes any possibility of giri-ninjou conflict between family obligation and passion. Akinari's coding of the passion between the men in terms of fraternal loyalty also renders the relationship legitimate according to neo-Confucian ethics. Only a samurai can understand and love a samurai.

Before he has even met Akana, Samon experiences pain in his heart merely from hearing of the suffering of a fellow member of the warrior class. Though cautioned by a disinterested third-party on the risk on contagion, Samon unhesitatingly risks his life. Upon entering the room, he is immediately smitten by the older warrior, confirming to himself as he gazes down on Akana that this certainly "is no ordinary man." Samon insists upon concocting the needed medicine with his own hands. Akana responds in kind, surprised and gratified by Samon's love. Akinari conveys the emotion between the two men in uniquely Japanese fashion. He writes two Chinese graphs usually read *airen* (a word with romantic overtones), but provides the phonetic gloss *awaremi* (sympathy). Akana instantly recognizes the unspoken passion of a fellow samurai, and responds by swearing his eternal bond to the man he has only just met. The younger Samon, for his part, vows to come each day to nurse Akana back to health. The older samurai's story of how he has arrived at his

present state reinforces the idea the world is chaotic and amoral. The two men only have each other, a bond that is strengthened by their similar educational backgrounds and scholarly interpretations.

The significance of Akana's designation of himself as the elder of the pair may be lost on readers unfamiliar with the etiquette that governed sex between males in Tokugawa Japan. As Paul Schalow has written, in sex between males, one man always played the role of adult mentor while the other assumed the role of boy-novice. In the pleasure quarters, hairstyle formally distinguished "boys" from "adults." As the younger of the men, Samon assumes the "boy" role. Akana soon is adopted into Samon's home. The men's relationship develops in accordance with the customs of heterosexual marriage. Akana's declaration that Samon's mother is now his own has all the appearances of a proposal. Samon responds with joy and relief, ascribing to his mother feelings that surely belong equally to him: "Mother has always worried about my loneliness." Samon's mother also receives the news as a declaration of matrimony, confessing to Akana of her son's many defects, but asking the older scholar nevertheless to take good care of her boy.

Once the sexual role of each man is understood, Samon's rather impossible demands on Akana make sense. Akana's parting from Samon strikingly resembles the scene in "Thickets" when Katsushirō takes leave of Miyagi. Both Samon and Miyagi are terrified by fears of being forgotten and abandoned. In an attempt to console their waiting lovers, Katsushirō and Akana agree to fix definite times when they will return. Samon's heightened insecurity, no doubt intensified by his previous solitude, and the brevity of his time with his partner, however, leads him to make the extravagant request that Akana choose a specific date to return. In contrast, later in the tale when Samon leaves his mother, he emphasizes that the uncertainty of life makes all promises suspect, but that he will do his best to return quickly.

Akana's choice for the date of his return, the day of the Chrysanthemum Festival or the ninth day of the ninth month has several implications not readily apparent. As Zolbrod indicates, celebrations of the festival often involve remembering friends from whom one has parted (220, note 148). On the other hand, the editors of *Shōgakkan* note that the choice "brings to mind male-male love (*danshoku*)."¹ Though the editors refrain from providing further explanation, the reason for such association is that, in Japanese,

chrysanthemum flower is a euphemism for anus. An alternate translation of the title of the tale might therefore read "The Anal Oath." After setting this date, the two "exhaust their passion" for each other (*nasake wo tukusu* 249).

Samon's mother gently chides him for his obsessive insistence that Akana will be able to return on the promised day despite the great distance involved. As Samon watches others going about their business, worried that Akana still has not yet arrived, his "heart becomes drunk" (*kokoro yoeru ga gotoshi*). His mother again attempts to convince him to be more reasonable, using poetic allusions to question why Samon should bear a grudge, even if Akana does not arrive that day. She later upbraids him for the same feeling when she discovers him crying uncontrollably. Her repeated use of the word *uramu* (to hate as a consequence of frustrated longing), linguistically links Samon to the angry female spirits discussed below, and further suggests the sexual nature of his relationship with Akana. At the conclusion of the tale, Samon safely escapes after avenging his lover. As with Toyoo, however, the question remains: what will he do upon returning home but return to his superfluous life of solitude?

Akinari's male protagonists are inevitably punished for seeking wealth, or falling prey to passion. None seem interested or capable in engaging in farming or fishing, or other activities recognized as valuable by their families. Their scholarly and artistic pursuits disparaged or unrecognized, the men have only a tenuous relationship with the mundane. Their understanding of their position as Confucian *kunshi* (gentlemen) severely circumscribes them emotionally, economically and socially. As we have seen, Samon's love for Akana can be affirmed by construing it as the *shingi* (loyalty) of a younger brother for an older brother. Akana's death temporarily allows Samon to act in accordance with historic precedent as he has been educated to do. What haunts Akinari's tales, however, is the question of how true samurai may engage society when not fighting.

The Evil in Virtuous Women

The relationship between Samon and Akana demonstrates Akinari's belief that scholar-samurai hold a monopoly on certain virtues and intellectual skills, a monopoly that isolates samurai from certain economic and social relationships. If samurai are circumscribed because of notions of virtue, women

are limited by their corrupt nature. For example, the enlightened holy man Kaian Zenji in “The Blue Hood,” after giving several famous examples of women from the past who were transformed into moths, snakes, ghouls, explains, “Probably because of the malice in their nature females readily turn into vicious demons” (189).

Despite generalized statements that express contempt for women, and reassure men of their ability to control them, the individual women who appear in the tales present a more complex picture. For example, as mentioned, Samon’s mother alone maintains her family through her work spinning. In the absence of Samon’s father, she appears to function as the head of the family, a situation that supports Walthall’s description of Tokugawa village society as a place where women could step into typically male roles in order to help their families prosper in certain circumstances (Walthall 68, 69). Samon’s mother approves Akana’s formal adoption into the family. When Akana fails to return, she comforts her son by alluding to the poetry of the *Shinkokinshū*, revealing a high degree of learning. Akana’s spirit’s last words to Samon are a request that he take care of their mother, a reflection of the esteem in which she is held.

Samon’s mother is by no means exceptional in Akinari’s tales or in Tokugawa society. Akinari’s tales of highly educated daughters and wives reflect the remarkable investments that, according to Walthall, wealthy families often made in the education of daughters. Proper daughters educated in feminine posture, dress, deferential language and household management could enhance the reputation of the entire family. Consequently, a “well-dressed, well-traveled, well-educated, and well-mannered girl was a family asset” (Walthall 49). For example, to demonstrate the superior breeding of Samon’s family, the narrator relates that Samon’s sister, after initially serving as a maid in one of the prosperous families of the village, has been accepted as a wife. Isora, the wronged wife in “Caldron,” is praised for her beauty, good lineage, her obedience to her parents, and her talents in koto and poetry.

Of all the female characters, Miyagi undoubtedly represents Akinari’s classical ideal. The title of the tale in which she appears, “House amid the Thickets,” alludes to a dilapidated house in the *Tale of Genji*. As beautiful in appearance as she is irreproachable in character, Miyagi remonstrates with Katsushirō when he tells her he is leaving, but when she realizes that she cannot change his mind, she defers to his decision. Akinari paints a picture of

her waiting patiently for his return until her death.

Miyagi's character is proven in Akinari's text by her uncompromising chastity, mentioned three times in the text. According to Nakamura Hiroyasu, male obsession with female chastity did not occur until the early modern period. Anne Walthall, however, notes that rural women seemed to ignore with impunity official samurai strictures against premarital promiscuity. For example, Thomas Jones reported that in one village in Ibaraki prefecture, less than 2 percent of the unmarried women were virgins. *Yobai* in which men would partake in "night visits" seem to have been common in many regions (Walthall 50, 51).

More than Miyagi's beauty, her deferential character, or the passion of her longing, her poetry defines her as a true noblewoman. Realizing that her husband will not return, she complains through an elegant waka following a pattern established by her Heian forbearers. Her poem alludes to a poem in the classical anthology, *the Kokinshū*. At the conclusion of the tale, Akinari has the old man relate what may appear a rather superfluous story of Tegona, another beautiful woman who sacrificed herself. To understand Tegona's function, one must realize the importance that the nativist scholar Akinari attached to the revival of a utopian past, which he felt could be uncovered in Japanese classics. The old man's juxtaposition of Tegona, a tragic poetic figure from the *Manyōshū*, and Miyagi allows Akinari to illustrate his "belief that history has a moral significance and the past forms a continuous pattern stretching back to antiquity" (Zolbrod 39). Despite living in an age in which men behave as beasts and, and war rages, Miyagi's existence stands as proof that one can nevertheless attain the perfection of the past. Akinari's use of women as vessels of tradition who represent the continuity of the past anticipates a construction of female gender common within the formation of the nation-state. In this respect, Akinari may be said to be a "modern" writer.

Miyagi's ghostly appearance recalls the fear of female sexuality running through Tokugawa society. All women were potential shamans whose bodies symbolically manifested numerous taboos the violation of which could cause terrible misfortune. Shinto beliefs assigned women particular significance in agricultural production, but construed menstruating women as polluted. Marriage and licensed prostitution represented ways of confining perilous female sexuality (Walthall 64). In Akinari's opening tale "White Peak," a

debate takes place between the poet Saigyō and the angry spirit of Emperor Sutoku. Emperor Sutoku's eventual concession that his rebellion was not "in accordance with the teachings of the Sun Goddess" reminds readers that, despite men's control over the polity, a female reigns over Shinto belief, which justifies the rule of the imperial family (100).

Miyagi's transformation from a patiently waiting woman to a spirit of unfulfilled longing, suggests the supernatural capacities innate to women, powers that prove lethal in later tales. Upon Katsushirō's return, she twice mentions *urami* as the primary feeling that has overtaken her spirit. The expression of *urami*, (hateful grudge) betrays how easily Miyagi's frustrated longing could have turned to a thirst for vengeance, a feeling strongly suggested by her death poem, in which she confesses of her bitterness at having been deceived by her faith in Katsushirō's promise. The Japanese word for angry spirit *onryō*, which employs the graph for *urami*, suggests how perilous is Katsushirō's situation. Her husband's intense remorse and dedicated prayers for the repose of his wife's soul save him. Katsushirō also appears to have sex with the ghost of his wife, an act that may also be significant in the appeasement of her frustration. In Japanese literature, references to the brevity of night typically indicate sexual relations. After Akinari's insistence on Miyagi's chastity even after being abandoned and forgotten, one last tumble with Katsushirō seems amply merited. As "White Serpent" indicates, female lust poses just as great a danger as anger and jealousy. Although Miyagi's spirit is appeased in the end, the tale reveals that even the meekest, most virtuous of women possesses unfathomable powers.

In "Caldron" a meekly compliant 17 year-old girl of good education and lineage is transformed into a vengeful, murderous spirit. Akinari's narrator opens the tale with a cautionary message of how an upset woman can ruin a man, and cause him to be the laughing stock of the world. The narrator advises men to guard against female jealousy by (1) watching closely over themselves, and (2) educating their wives. The tiniest slip, however, can lead to disaster. Only his intrinsic male qualities (his manliness) enable a man to "tame his wife." The comparison of taming women to catching wild birds associates women with a wild nature that requires constant vigilance. The story that unfolds, however, rather deflates the bluster of the opening. Readers are given little hope that Shōtarō could have escaped his fate had he been more "manly"

in his treatment of his wife Isora.

The daughter of a Shinto priest who is the head of a famous shrine, Isora's power is suggested from her introduction. When still alive, Isora expresses her "urami" to Shōtarō to no avail. He ignores her complaints, and callously abuses her kindness. Death, in contrast, enables the spirit of Isora to dispatch Sode, the mistress of her husband with ease. Soon afterward, when the spirit of Isora points a thin blue finger, and says, "Let me show you how bitter my revenge can be," the terrified Shōtarō takes every precaution imaginable to save himself. Isora must fight against the Gods and Buddhas, yet even with the forces of religion behind him, Shōtarō cannot save himself. His wife's victory allows her to rip off his head in a gruesome end to the story that certainly seems to throw into question the efficacy of the axiom at the beginning. Readers are left with a terrifying image of an angry female.

In "White Serpent," Akinari demonstrates the futility of any attempt by mere mortals to control an angry female spirit. In a scene in which a brave warrior attempts to arrest Manago, a clap of thunder roars out, she disappears, and all in the vicinity are thrown to the ground. Only the perceiving eyes of the priest of the Yamato Shrine, one of Japan's most venerated shrines, which functioned to preserve peace throughout the land, can see the evil essence of Manago and her servant Maroya. Even when Toyoo returns to his home and marries another woman Tomiko, Manago succeeds in possessing her. She warns Toyoo that if he does not succumb to her desires, his blood will flow in the valley. When Toyoo brings in a priest from Mt. Kumano, the priest's arrogant belief in the efficacy of his exorcisms exposes him to the full terror of Manago's fury, a shock that proves fatal. Only the Abbot Hōkai, who fully comprehends Manago's terrible power, enables Toyoo to subdue her by covering her with a monk's robe soaked in mustard-seed incense, a staple in demon subjugation. The spell succeeds in driving Manago to assume her true shape as a serpent of lust.

Manago, who behaves with the refinement of one raised in the capital, easily awes the rural Toyoo. Maroya, Manago's servant, constantly reminds readers of Manago's noble status. Toyoo's lowly position as second son and third child undoubtedly leave him particularly susceptible to Manago's charms. With no power, status or responsibility, Toyoo presents a character that Manago finds easy to manipulate. In his first words to her, he recites a poem

from the *Manyōshū*, demonstrating his readiness to interpret her appearance in a romantic framework. His lack of authority and grounding in his family and village allows him the freedom to indulge in dreaming, and his early interaction with Manago shifts between dream and reality.

As soon as Toyoo arrives at Manago's dwelling, she and her servant Maroya seize the initiative, prevent Toyoo from leaving, and succeed in getting him drunk. Not surprisingly, Manago soon proposes marriage. Regarding the family structure of early modern Japan, Kathleen Uno writes, "The fundamental goal was household continuity, not the well-being of individual members. Adults tried to train young female members, such as brides (*yome*) and daughters, and male members, including servants, sons, and even the heir, to subordinate their personal hopes for occupation, education, or marriage" to the needs of the *ie* (Uno 23). Toyoo's acceptance of the marriage proposal betrays his obligations to his older brother and father, and violates the social strictures against marrying outside of one's class. The sword that Manago gives to Toyoo to keep with him symbolizes his transgression of strict social categories. His brother, upon seeing the sword, immediately declares that it does not belong in a fisherman's house. It is a sword "that a general might have and that's no good" (168). At the conclusion of the tale, by defeating Manago, Toyoo is able to demonstrate that at last he has accepted the limits of his social position.

Conclusion

Katsushiro, Shotaro and Toyo confront female spirits with decidedly different consequences. By returning to his home, demonstrating profound regret, sleeping with his wife's spirit, and praying fervently for the repose of her soul, Katsushirō earns Miyagi's forgiveness. As a result of her happiness at seeing him, her enduring grudge (*nagaki urami*) dissolves (314). In contrast, Shōtarō's attempt to escape his obligations to his wife and family leads to his gruesome death despite his ability to marshal the forces of Japanese religion on his behalf. Toyoo fluctuates, initially attempting to flee, a decision that throws him into greater danger. Only after deciding to return to his family and fulfill his obligations to his brother and father does he become capable of defeating Manago.

Miyagi and Isora both die after being abandoned by their husbands. Akinari's stress of their pathetic lack of power when alive makes their transformations into spirits all the more stunning. Both women are contained by their families. As proper daughters and wives, they exhibit the ideals fostered by women's formal education in the Tokugawa period: the qualities of obedience, gentleness, taciturnity, cleanliness and industry (Walthall 45). To the extent that they remain within their households, they present little threat or challenge. Even when transformed into vengeful spirits, the women continue to act on behalf of the *ie*. Miyagi forgives Katsushirō because he has returned home whereas Isora punishes Shōtarō for his attempted flight. In Akinari's text, the spirits of wronged wives act as a supernatural police force supervising the movements of their husbands, and ensuring that male behavior conforms to neo-Confucian ethics. Dead or alive, wives are viewed as a means of harnessing young men. The families of Toyoo and Shōtarō attempt to correct the faults of the men by having them marry, thereby imposing stability upon them.

Manago manifests the dangers inherent in a loose woman, that is, a woman not bound to any specific family. Akinari's portrayal of Manago's aggressive pursuit of Toyoo reflects the assumptions of Edo society in which the cause of sexual impropriety was inevitably discovered in female lust (Walthall 64). Manago's success in captivating Toyoo owes more to her cunning manipulation of his emotions than to her supernatural powers. The conclusion of the text disturbingly implies that a boy can rise to manhood by physically overcoming the woman who manipulates him. Manago's superior status allows her to invert temporarily the gender hierarchy. Her abrupt proposal recalls the creation myth of the Kojiki when the female Izanami makes the mistake of speaking first to the male Izanagi, which results in her giving birth to a leech-child. Manago's proposal disrupts the natural order with similar consequences. Toyoo will have no trouble if he will only behave as an obedient son should. Manago loses her power when Toyoo no longer listens to her. Akinari's message of how to deal with women is delivered by Abbot Hōkai, who sends the monk's robe to Toyoo: "If you show the slightest weakness, they are quite likely to escape" (183).

Akinari punishes individuals who attempt to separate from the *ie*. Although the text may give the appearance that men are free to go while women must wait behind, leaving inevitably produces *urami*. *Urami*, a hateful

grudge arising from frustrated longing, is used repeatedly to describe abandoned women, or in the case of Samon, a young male who fears abandonment. If men do not return and “tame wives” by soothing their anger, the women may die and become onryo, or spirits of urami such as Isora. Separation from the ie turns men and women into beasts, a phenomenon made clear by Akinari’s setting the tales during periods of chaos. Younger son’s, scholars and non-productive males are at particular risk because of their tenuous ties to the ie.

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